

## **Meeting with Mr. Abney – multi-age classroom (3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>)**

August 20, 2012 5:30 pm

**\*\*Please know that I am doing my best to make sure I give out the information in the way it was talked about and discussed at the meeting. There may be minor differences, nuances that I may have missed or I may not explain things as well as they were explained at the meeting. So, please, if you have any further questions or want clarification, speak to Mr. Abney. I apologize in advance if this happens, but I took notes as fast as I could, and hope the information is helpful to you.\*\***

Mr. Abney had his website open for us to look at and he went through the site. Homework is always listed on the website, separated by grade. It is sometimes the same for the kids, and sometimes different. Look under your child's actual grade for homework. Mr. Abney says that he tells the kids that it is okay to struggle on their work, then ask for parent help (a section about not asking parents for help on the website). He wants them to use their own skills, be independent thinkers, but if they need help after they've thought things through, to ask for help from a parent, etc.

Weekly Info has everything they've been working on throughout the week. Our kids are part of 2 science programs, there are 4<sup>th</sup> grade standards and he supplements with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade standards. There is no duplication for 4<sup>th</sup> graders (meaning, they didn't hear the same info that is 3<sup>rd</sup> grade standards last year) – it's all new. As far as 4<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies, he augments the curriculum with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade standards. For example (and hypothetically), Missions are a big 4<sup>th</sup> grade thing, the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders will focus on Native Americans at that time, since that is a big part of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Our kids are a part of the NASA, JPL pilot program.

Space Camp in Alabama came up. He has told the kids that it is something that he will be having an ongoing dialogue with us about. It takes place after school is done (June, July), for 5 days, there are options of "family camp" or teacher led camp, it's at the University of Alabama, Huntsville. We will continue to discuss this as the year goes on.

This is a project based learning class. Technology will hopefully be rolled out (laptops) next week. 4<sup>th</sup> graders will each get a laptop that they will take home. The 3<sup>rd</sup> graders will be one computer to 2 children, they will not be able to take them home. The question arose if they'd still be able to work on things if they had to share a computer and Mr. Abney said they'd use an itouch instead (like to make imovies, etc.).

There is a calendar on the site, email Mr. Abney if you'd like to add something to it. He will put project presentations on the calendar so that we can attend presentations. (I'm guessing this would also be included in room parent emails).

The "contact" page has the form to email Mr. Abney. There is info on the reading log, GATE, etc.

The question of literature circles came up. Mr. Abney has literature appreciation every day. Mr. Abney tested the kids to create the literature groups, they will be grouped soon.

iMovie will be coming up in the fall (the kids creating movies). The first will be a habitat movie, he is doing terrariums this week.

Mr. Abney put up a website about “split classes” vs. “multi-age”. The key thing he said about our group of kids (which is Multi-age) is that the students are taught where they are at and at their level. Here is the website:

<http://multiageducation.wetpaint.com/page/Split+Class+vs.+Multiage>

A concern came up that all 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 4<sup>th</sup> grade standards were being met. Mr. Abney said all of the standards are being met at the grade level the student is. Math will be different for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders since it is very different for them (although at the very beginning of the year, they learn similar things), Mr. Abney is aware and the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders will be getting their math materials (books) soon.

The question came up – What about next year for our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders? (since no one can see what next year will look like in reality, please read this as what it might be like, nothing set in stone). The goal for Mr. Abney would be to have the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders become 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the multi-age classroom, along with 2<sup>nd</sup> graders (going into 3<sup>rd</sup>) who are also independent thinkers. The curriculum would be changed, so as not to repeat anything that the new 4<sup>th</sup> graders would’ve already done.

Mr. Abney has not taught in a Multi-age classroom before, but he has worked with gifted kids for many years. He added to this, but I missed what he said – about his schooling and who he studied under. Please ask him if you want more info on his background.

Recess and snack time came up. Lunch has been fine, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders see their friends and the other 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Recess has been difficult for some of the kids because they are with 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> graders. The question arose if the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders would perhaps have a hard time socially with snack time recess? Mr. Abney said to give recess some time to see how it all works for the kids. He absolutely wants to know if there are any problems, or talk to Mrs. Charles.

The question arose if there was anything extra for art for our students. Will any gifted arts be integrated? The kids (full school) is getting 3 art disciplines (visual arts, drama, dance) as well as the music program (I need to confirm this). As far as anything extra, that will be something we will feel out during the year.

It was brought up by a parent that their understanding was that this was a brand new curriculum. It is not a new curriculum. Math and Science have a new program, but it’s all California standards.

As far as curriculum and projects – Standards will be met for all students in both grades.

Field trips came up. Especially as it pertains to the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. I brought up the example of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade always going to the LA Phil. Will our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders go to that? It is something that will need to be talked about with Mrs. Charles. Nothing is set in stone. Our multi-age learning class will go on many field trips. He listed some (partial list by me): Griffith Observatory (family night), Science Center (flight portion, etc.), a Mission and others listed on his website.

### **Support from us? What can we do? Can we volunteer?**

Yes! He does science Wednesdays and Fridays starting at 1:15. He could use volunteers for that, as well as mornings on those days (before the bell, I said 8 am, but please check with him) to help set up the science. At 2:05, the kids work in small groups, and he also said parents were welcome to volunteer at that time. **Please ask Mr. Abney for more info on volunteering, since this all came up quickly and we discussed a lot!**

\*\*Hannah and Julie discussed sign up genius, Hannah is going to set it up for volunteering so he knows when to expect help.

### **Supplies:**

Spiral notebook for math notes. He said he'd prefer the graph paper spiral, but regular lined paper is fine, too. The kids will each need a flash drive – but one with a lot of space – at least 2 gigs (the imovies take up a lot of space).

Mr. Abney said he doesn't want the kids to get stressed out. He mentioned that some have been upset, stressed. He tells them school and learning should be fun. A little stress is fine, but if a child is struggling to please talk to Mr. Abney.

Kids can take books home – e.g. “Because of Winn-Dixie”. This came up because a child had questions, but didn't know they could bring the book home to be able to look up the questions they had.

There is still 3<sup>rd</sup> grade material that hasn't been delivered yet. They will get 3<sup>rd</sup> grade material soon.

Homework – 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> graders are allowed up to 45 minutes per night for homework (please ask Mr. Abney if you are wondering where this came from/who made that rule) For the weekends, it's “logging in” your time reading. Homework for the weekend is always posted on Fridays on his site, so if you have questions over the weekend, it's all there.

Kids are in charge of their reading logs. They need to keep ALL of them. They need to bring them home every night and back to school every day. If you look under, “files” on his site, you can print up another reading log, if need be.

At approx. 6:15, the meeting ended (when we got kicked out!). There were about 15 parents in attendance from both grades. Finally, let me say again, these are the notes, the best as I could take them. There may be minor errors or things that need to be explained more. If you have any other questions, do not hesitate to contact Mr. Abney.